

A BOLD CHALLENGE JUSTIFIED

NO. 3067

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1907
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 1, 1874

*“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again,
who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”*
Romans 8:34

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon this passage are as follows:
#256, The Believer's Challenge; #1223, Jesus, The Substitute for His People; and #2240, A Challenge and A Shield]

ALL through this very wonderful chapter the apostle seems to be piling up, in heaps upon heaps, the many marvels of divine grace. I might quote from the old classic fable of the giants who piled the mountains one upon the other—Pelion upon Ossa—and I might say that even so has Paul done here. He has piled mountain upon mountain of wondrous grace in his description of the way to heaven, and now he seems to have climbed to the top of them all, and to have transformed them into a kind of Tabor or Pisgah.

And as he stands there, he exults in the Lord. He waves the palm branch of triumph. He boasts with holy boasting. And he challenges all his enemies to attack him—“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

I. Here, first of all, is A SOLEMN QUESTION—a very solemn question if it were put to all here present—“Who is he that condemneth?”—for I am afraid that some of my hearers, if they asked that question, might have a speedy answer—“It is your own conscience that condemns you. It is the Word of God that condemns you. It is Christ Himself who condemns you. It is God, the Judge of all who condemns you because you have not fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the Gospel—you have not believed in Jesus.”

But Paul is speaking as a believer in Christ, and for him to ask the question, or for any other believer to put it, is a very different thing, for he may say what others must not, “Who can lay anything to my charge? Who is he that can condemn me, now that I have believed in Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior?”

Now, beloved, one answer that might be given to this question, “Who is he that condemneth?” is that *there are many who would if they could*, for probably no believer in Christ is without his enemies. There are few good men and women who are not slandered. The majority of God's people have been persecuted in some way or other—and some of them have had to lie in prison year after year.

Many more have been condemned to die and yet, inasmuch as slanderers and persecutors have no right to condemn the man of God, he may challenge his slanderers and his persecutors and say, “You may profess to condemn me if you please, but I count your condemnation to be no more potent than the whistling of the wind. You would condemn me if you could, but you cannot really do so.”

Satan, our arch-enemy, would condemn us if it were in his power. Only fancy him, for a moment, sitting on the judgment seat. If we had the devil to judge us, he would soon bring to our recollection our many faults, and follies, and failings, and condemn us for them. But O you fiend of hell, God has not made you the judge of His saints! You may cast foul insinuations against them, but the Lord says to you, concerning each one of them, “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan! Is not this a brand plucked out of the

fire?” Satan has no right to judge us and no power to condemn us. So, when he speaks the worst he can about us, we laugh him to scorn, rejoicing that God will bruise him under our feet shortly.

But beloved, *sometimes our own conscience condemns us*. The best man here will, at times, have painful memories of the past, and to look at the past, except through the glass made red by our Savior’s precious blood, is to look upon despair—for our past transgressions would drag us down to hell were it not for the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Ay, and we need not look back far to have this sad view, for the sins of any one of the best days we have ever lived might cause us to tremble. The sins of our holy things are black enough to cause us great sorrow. Did you ever pray a prayer that you could not have wept over afterwards? Have you ever preached a sermon with which you could feel content? Is not sin mixed with all that we do?

But here is the mercy, that our conscience is not set upon God’s throne to judge and to condemn us, although we do well to listen to the voice of conscience and to give heed to its admonitions. The apostle John reminds us that, “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” And that, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” With all our imperfections and our consciousness of guilt we rejoice that,—

*“There is a fountain fill’d with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”*

It looks a bold question for any man to put so unreservedly, “Who is he that condemneth?” But *there is really only One who can condemn*. Our characters may have been pulled to pieces by a thousand accusers, but they could not condemn us. When a prisoner stands in the dock, he need not be afraid of anybody except the judge and jury. It does not matter what you or I may believe about him—nobody but the twelve men in the box can give the verdict against him or in his favor. These are the persons before whom he has cause to tremble, but before none besides.

So, whoever may pretend to condemn us, there is only One who can really do so—and that is the Judge—and what is His name? O Christian, what a comforting fact is this to you! Your Judge is your Savior. And it is not possible to conceive that He who died and rose again, and entered into heaven—and every day pleads for us—can ever use His blessed lips to pronounce condemnation upon any one of His own people.

“Oh,” say you, “but He must do it as He is the Judge. He must not show any favor on the judgment seat.” That is a right remark and I have been sorry whenever I have heard a preacher say that it is a consolation to think that the Judge will be our friend. Why, beloved, we must not imagine that Jesus will judge partially and give His verdict in our favor because we are His friends. No, but here is our comfort—He, who is our Judge, beyond everybody else, knows the whole truth about us, and He would not justify us at the last if we really ought to be condemned. Ah, no! He is too just to do that.

But He knows that every believer is so completely justified that he cannot be condemned. He knows, as nobody else does, how the believer was justified—what blood it was that washed the believer white, and what righteousness it is that has made the believer “accepted in the Beloved.” He knows His own and He knows the way in which He has justified His own, and therefore, as an omniscient, infallibly just Judge, He knows that the sentence which will be passed upon the believer, which is a sentence of acquittal, is the only one that could be passed.

“Who is he that condemneth? Christ who died.” So the fact stands that, whatever there may be in store for others in connection with the coming day of final judgment, and the banishment of the condemned to hell, all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will never be condemned. Under no possible or conceivable circumstances can they ever be condemned, for they who are once forgiven and justified always shall be forgiven and justified in time and throughout eternity. There is no

condemnation now to them who are in Christ Jesus—and there never shall be. [See Sermon #1917, Volume 32—IN CHRIST NO CONDEMNATION]

II. Our second point is THE GROUND OF THIS HOLY CONFIDENCE.

It was holy confidence that made Paul ask, “Who is he that condemneth?” And he has given us the reasons for his confidence, but I shall first call your attention to what he has *not* given as the ground of confidence.

He does not say, “Who is he that condemneth?—for we have never sinned.” That would be a very good ground of confidence if it were true, for if we had never sinned, nobody could condemn us. God is not unrighteous, so He does not condemn an innocent man. But there is not one glorified person in heaven who will ever dare to plead that he had never sinned, for “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

We have all gone astray from God like lost sheep. Every one of us has gone the downward road. By the works of the law we can never be justified, for the law only brings to us a knowledge of sin and proves to us that our fancied perfection can never be the ground of our confidence.

Neither does the apostle ground his confidence on the fact of his repentance. Some people seem to have a notion that, although sin is a very evil thing, yet if repentance is sincere and deep, it will suffice to wash out the sin. But Paul does not say, “Who is he that condemneth?—for I have felt the plague of sin, and hated it, and wept over it, and turned from it.” He makes no mention whatever of his repentance as a ground of his confidence. He had truly repented, yet he never dreamed of relying upon his repentance as a reason for his justification in the sight of God.

Nor does he say that he puts any dependence upon a long life of holiness. From the time of his conversion, Paul had been an example to all the flock, so that he could even write, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” Yet he does not say, “Who is he that condemneth?—for I have lived a blameless life among you all, and none can convict me of sin.” Not a word of that sort does he utter.

I know that some of you seekers after salvation fancy that those good Christian people, whom you very much admire, must get a great deal of comfort out of the good lives that they lead. But I can assure you that this is not the case with any of them. They will all tell you that they have not the least confidence in themselves, or in their own doings, but that their confidence is found in quite another direction.

Paul does not say that his confidence was based upon the fact that he had practiced great self-denial and had been a most devoted missionary of the cross of Christ. It is true that he had been beaten, and stoned, and shut up in prison, and that he had been quite willing to lay down his life for his Lord, but he makes no mention of all that as the reason why he felt that he could not be condemned.

What do you think was Paul’s opinion of all the good works he had ever done and of all that he had suffered for the name of Christ? This is what he says, “I do count them but dung,” (he could hardly have used a more opprobrious word than that) “that I may win Christ and be found in him.”

A good man, when he was dying, said that he was gathering all his good works and his bad works together in one bundle and flinging them all overboard. In his estimation, the one set was about as good as the other as a ground of confidence in the sight of God—and he meant to be rid of the whole and to put his trust somewhere else.

And believe me, dear hearer, as I stand here before you, I know whom I have believed—and I have not only a hope of eternal life, but I know that I have eternal life within my own soul. But if you ask me whether I base my confidence of my salvation upon the fact that, these many years, I have preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I tell you, “No, I place no reliance upon my own preaching as any ground of merit in the sight of God.”

And if I am asked whether, having experienced much of the grace of God, I build my confidence on my experience, I answer, “No, in no wise. Infinitely better than anything within me or of me is the Rock upon which my soul rests, or else I should be resting upon a shifting quicksand which would be my destruction.” On Christ and what He has done, my soul hangs for time and eternity.

And if your soul also hangs there, it will be saved as surely as mine shall be. And if you are lost trusting in Christ, whoever you may be, I will be lost with you—and I will go to hell with you. I must do so, for I have nothing else to rely upon but the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived, and died, and was buried, and rose again, and went up to heaven, and still lives and pleads for sinners at the right hand of God.

I have thus shown you that the apostle's confidence was not founded upon anything of himself. Now I want to explain to you the reasons why he knew that he was not condemned and never should be. He had four pillars to his confidence.

And the first great massive pillar was this—“*It is Christ that died.*” But Paul, you have broken God's law, so He must punish you. He replies, “God cannot punish me. He cannot even condemn me.” But Paul, you helped put Stephen to death—your hands were red with the blood of the martyrs. You hunted the saints of God and delighted to put them to death—and yet you say that God cannot condemn you for that and never will?

“Ay,” says the apostle, “He never will. He never can.” And why? “Because Christ died.” But Paul, what has Christ's death to do with your guilt? His answer is, “All my sins, however many or however black they may have been, were laid upon Christ, and He stood in my stead in the sight of God, and in my place He suffered that which has rendered full satisfaction to the law of God for all my evil deeds, and thoughts, and words. The sufferings of Jesus were the sufferings of my Substitute. He bore, that I might never bear, the wrath of God on account of my sin.”

Do you see this, poor sin-burdened soul? If Jesus Christ died in your place, God cannot condemn you. If Jesus Christ did really suffer in your stead, as your Substitute, where would God's honor and justice be if He should punish the sinner for whom Jesus had died as Substitute? That can never be.

The comfort of the text lies here. Paul says, “It is Christ that died.” That is to say, it is the Son of God that died and there must be infinite merit in the atonement which was presented by the sufferings of so august a person. Paul says, “It is *Christ* that died.” That word signifies “the anointed one”—the divine Person who was sent by the Father and anointed by the Holy Spirit, and who Himself undertook to suffer in the place of His people. He did not do it of His own will alone—He was authorized to do it—appointed and anointed to do it.

God put His Son into that place, as the prophet Isaiah says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Now, see, if Christ was my Substitute, and if God appointed Him and anointed Him as my only Substitute, to suffer in my room, and place, and stead, where in the whole universe can there be found any reason why God should first punish Christ and then punish me?

The only question is—Did He so die in my room, and place, and stead? The answer to that question is this—If I believe in Christ, I am one of those for whom He died as Substitute. If I trust Him with my whole heart, if I rely alone upon Him as my Substitute and Savior, I have the mark and sign upon me that He suffered in my stead, that He offered a full and complete atonement for my sin, and knowing this, I dare to say, as confidently as the apostle Paul said it, that Christ died for me.

Who can ever condemn the sinner for whom Christ died as Substitute and Savior? Is not this a good foundation to have under my feet? May I not stand securely here, and knowing that Jesus died instead of me, may I not feel assured that I can never die, and that I can never be sent to hell, for Jesus Christ has suffered all that I ought to have suffered?

But the apostle had a second reason for feeling sure that he should not be condemned, and that was that Christ had risen from the dead. “*Yea rather,*” says he, “*who is risen again.*” Now, if Christ had not risen from the dead, He would have been proved to be an impostor. If He had not risen from the dead, it would have been clear that He was not God, or the Son of God. But His rising from the dead proved that He was both God and the appointed and anointed Savior.

Christ's death paid the debt that His people owed to divine justice—and when He came out of the prison of death in which He had been detained for a while, it was, so to speak, God's receipt, by which

He said to the whole universe, "My Son has paid the debts of all His people, therefore I let Him go free." Jesus was the Hostage for all His chosen ones and until the last farthing of the tremendous price of their redemption had been paid, He must lie in the prison of the tomb. But when it had been certified by infallible justice that the great transaction was finished and the redemption of His people was fully accomplished, then Christ was set free and "He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."

Now see, believer, what is the effect of this glorious truth. How can God ever condemn you after He has accepted Christ as your Substitute—after He has publicly accepted Him by raising Him from the dead in the presence of men and angels? God cannot so belie Himself. It is not possible that, after He has accepted the Substitute, He should afterwards condemn those for whom that Substitute bled and died.

Paul had those two pillars—the death and resurrection of Christ—but he added a third. He says that *Christ is at the right hand of God*. This is another weighty reason for our feeling that we never can be condemned, for the right hand of God is the place of power and the place of majesty. Christ at the right hand of God is there as King. And as King He is able to defend His people against all their adversaries. False accusers, therefore, shall be driven away by the power of His omnipotent arm.

While Christ is King, at the right hand of God, what accuser shall dare to impeach us in the courts of heaven? Christ's sitting at the right hand of God proves that His great redeeming work is done. If He had not completed it, He would not be sitting down. But it is done and done forever. Finished in that matchless loom is the perfect robe of righteousness that we are to wear forever. The last throw of the sacred shuttle of His untold agony has been made. Dyed is the wondrous garment that we are to wear, for it has been dipped in His precious blood. And when it was finished, the Divine Worker "sat down at the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool."

For Christ to sit at the right hand of God is a continual certificate from the Father that He is satisfied with the substitution of His Son instead of us and satisfied with us as we are represented in Him. Every moment that Christ is at the right hand of God, every believer is safe. For Christ to be in heaven, and for the people for whom He died to be in hell, is utterly impossible. For Christ to be there as our Representative, and yet for those whom He represents to be cast out from the favor of God, would be a monstrosity, a blasphemy, which cannot be imagined for a single instant.

The Head is glorified, so the members of His mystical body shall never be condemned. They must be eternally saved because He is at the right hand of God. Look up, then, Christian! You looked down into the tomb and saw Him there paying your debts. You looked round to the garden from where He rose and saw that your debts were all discharged. Now look up to the heaven where He dwells with His Father—and see yourself "accepted in the Beloved."

The apostle had yet one more ground of confidence, for he says that Christ "*also maketh intercession for us*." And if any doubt could linger until now, surely this must expel it. When Jesus pleads for His people, His pleas are omnipotent and God will never deny to His Son the reward of His soul-travail. I suppose that, in heaven Christ pleads for His people vocally, but it is not at all necessary that He should, for His very presence there is an irresistible plea. If someone were pleading before an earthly court, and if he had been an old soldier, and had rendered valiant service to his country, if he were to bare his breast and show the scars of the wounds that he received in battle, he would not have to say much, for his scars would plead better than any words could.

And Jesus in heaven lifts His hands and feet and shows His pierced side. His scarred person, still adorned with the marks of His passion and death, is an everlasting and overwhelming plea. If Jesus pleads for me, can His Father reject me? If so, He must also reject His Son, He must refuse the authoritative requests of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, He must deny to Jesus that which He well deserves—and that He never can do. O believer, if you still have any doubts about your acceptance in Christ, let them fly before this fourth mighty blow, "who also maketh intercession for us."

I am not going to keep you here much longer, but I want just to remind you that the main difficulty with some of you seems to be that you do believe these great truths, but you do not fully realize what is

contained in them. I am speaking now only to you who really do believe in Jesus. You are resting upon Him alone—you know you are. Unless you are awfully deceived, each one of you can say,—

*“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesu’s blood and righteousness.”*

Well, beloved, do not let me merely say this and you simply hear it, but believe it, enjoy it, drink it in, live on it. You are not condemned by God, and therefore the opposite of that is true—you are accepted by God, you are beloved of God, you are dear to God—you are pure and precious in God’s sight. Let that blessed thought get into your brain and when it is there, pray to God to let it get down deeper, even into your heart and soul, and then say as Paul did, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Why do I see you hang down your head and look as gloomy as an owl? You might well look so if you were condemned or if there were any fear of your being condemned—but there is no such fear if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I sometimes hear preachers say that we are in a state of probation, but I should like to know who is in such a state as that. Certainly, the sinner is not, for he is already lost. And the saint is not, for he is saved and never can be lost. The sinner is already condemned and the saint is already justified. We are not waiting for the verdict, for it has already been given.

It is recorded concerning every believer that he is justified, and that the claim he makes that he is a child of God is a true one, and that all the glorious inheritance in the land of the blessed is his, and he may claim it at once as his own, for it all belongs to him. So, up with you child of God! Up with you, bird of the day! Eagle of God, will you sit, day after day, moping in the dark, when you might soar up into the light and gaze even at the sun?

Up with you, son of the morning! Up with you, child of light! Away from all your gloomy doubts and fears! You have a million a year for spending money, given to you by the God of grace, so will you go on spending a few pence a day, like a beggar who needs to be careful even of his farthings? You are forgiven, man. Then live as a forgiven man should.

What though God smites you every now and then with trouble? Can you not say, as one did long ago, “Smite, Lord, as hard as You will, for there is no anger in Your blows now, and therefore I can bear them without complaining”? Are you suffering severe losses and carrying heavy crosses? They ought to seem very light to you now. As long as you are forgiven, what does anything else matter?

Go to a man in Newgate, condemned to die, and take him a free pardon. Tell him that by the favor of his sovereign, he is to live. And do you think he will begin murmuring because some little thing is not just as he would like it? Oh, no! He will say, “It is enough for me that my life is spared.” Now you are forgiven. You are God’s child. You are on the way to heaven, so, “fret not thyself because of evil-doers.” Murmur not against the Most High. Take your harp down from the willows and sing unto the Lord a new song, for He has wrought marvels of mercy for you.

And then, in the light of this wonderful love of God to you, so live at home and abroad, that others shall ask, “What makes this man so happy? What makes this woman so glad?” I will not say to you who are forgiven—Sing with your voice all the day, though I would have you praise the Lord with joyful lips as much as you can. But let the bells of your hearts go on ringing all day.

Sometimes when I think of what the Lord has done for me, I feel myself to be like a church steeple that I saw some few months ago. There had been a wedding in the place and the bells were pealing out a merry chime. And as they rang, I distinctly saw that steeple reel and rock, and the four pinnacles seemed to be tossing to and fro—the whole tower seemed as though it must come down as the bells pealed out again and again.

And sometimes when my soul pulls the big bell—"Jesus loved you, and gave Himself for you, and you are accepted in Him, you are God's own child, and on your way to heaven, and a crown of eternal life is yours"—I feel as if this crazy steeple of my body would rock and reel beneath the excessive joy and be scarcely able to hold the ecstatic bliss which the love of God creates within my soul. And then do I sing,—

*"In the heavenly Lamb, thrice happy I am,
And my heart it doth leap at the sound of His name."*

Oh, I would that every one of you had that joy! And surely, everyone shall have it who will have it in God's way. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you shall be absolved from all your guilt. If you will but entrust yourself to Him, whoever you are, He will take your sin, and lift it off from you, and cause you to be accepted, as all His people are.

God give to all of you the grace to believe in Jesus and to go on your way rejoicing, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 20:1-18

Verse 1. *The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.*

Her love for her Lord made her rise early and helped her to overcome the fear which would have prevented many from going out "when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre." There are fears which some cannot shake off in the dark—and those fears would be apt to become intensified in going to a sepulchre in the dark. But love wakes early to try to find Christ and love can see in the dark when looking for Jesus. Mary little expected to find the tomb of Jesus rifled and the stone rolled away—she was so surprised at what she saw that she hurried away to tell the story to other friends of her Lord.

2. *Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.*

This was the language of ignorance and unbelief. She had forgotten that the Lord had said that He would rise again the third day. Or else she had never understood the meaning of His words. So, instead of saying "He is risen," she said, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him."

Unbelief often reads things wrongly—it reads sorrow into facts that should create joy. Nothing could have made Mary happier than to believe that her Lord had risen from the dead—and nothing ever made her more sorrowful than feeling that she must say, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him."

3-4. *Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.*

They wanted to know what had really happened, so they resolved that they would go and see. The woman's message surprised them and troubled them, "So they ran both together." A good many people seemed to be running that morning. Had the disciples known the whole truth, they might have taken to dancing for joy, but their fears quickened their footsteps.

5. *And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying;—*

So that he knew that they had not taken away the body of Jesus, for if they had, they certainly would not have taken off the linen clothes. It would have been very difficult and would have taken considerable time to unwrap the cold grave-clothes when they were bound to the body by the ointments that had been used—"He saw the linen clothes lying;"—

5. *Yet went he not in.*

Perhaps out of reverence or possibly, out of deference to the older man, he would give him the preference and let him enter first.

6. *Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,—*

They were evidently both struck with that sight. It indicated that there had been no haste, no hurry by thieves, but deliberate action of quite another kind.

7. *And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.*

As one has well said, there were the grave-clothes left as the furniture for the believer's last bed, and there was the napkin, "in a place by itself," to wipe away the tears of mourners. The chief lesson is that this act had been done at leisure by someone who was in no hurry whatever. He had put together the linen clothes, and wrapped up the napkin, and laid it "in a place by itself."

8. *Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed.*

That is a great deal for John to be able to say concerning himself, for Mary had not yet believed. Possibly Peter had scarcely believed, but John had. He felt certain that the Lord had risen. He remembered His words and He correctly interpreted the fact now before him—"He saw, and believed."

9. *For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.*

They did not understand it. Even John himself did not until then. The rest of the disciples had never put that interpretation upon our Lord's words which was the clear and simple meaning of them, namely, that He would rise from the dead. I should not wonder if there are other words of Scripture, with regard to the future, which we should comprehend if we took them exactly as they stand in the Word—but we have put other meanings upon them, and consequently, see no further into them.

10. *Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.*

Having ascertained that the body of Jesus was not there, and John having come to the conclusion that the Lord had indeed risen from the dead, he and Peter went away home prayerfully to wait and see what would happen next.

11. *But Mary stood—*

She was not going away home. Love cannot leave the place where it lost its object. It will continue to search there. "But Mary stood—"

11. *Without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked—*

Some can weep, but never look. Do not act so, beloved, but look for comfort even when your heart is breaking. "As she wept, she stooped down, and looked—"

11-12. *Into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white—*

The resurrection color, the color of joy and gladness. "Two angels in white."

12. *Sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.*

I have no doubt that the angel who sat at the feet was quite as content to sit there as the other was to sit at the head. If any two of you are sent upon the Lord's business, do not pick and choose as to where you shall be or what you shall do. "One at the head, and the other at the feet." I am afraid that if they had been men instead of angels, both would have wanted to sit at the head, and the feet would have been neglected. This sight seems to remind one of the mercy seat where the cherubim stood facing each other and covering the mercy seat with their outspread wings.

13. *And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.*

Grief has not many words. It is apt to repeat itself, as the Lord Himself did in Gethsemane when He prayed three times using the same words.

14-15. *And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?*

Christ often repeats the words of His messengers as if to endorse them. The angels said, “Woman, why weepest thou?” The angels’ Master said the same. I pray Him, tonight, not only to give me the right word to say, but also to say it Himself to your hearts. But Jesus added another question to the angels’, “Woman, why weepest thou?”

15. *Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.*

Did it occur to her that, possibly, the gardener objected to having a corpse in the garden and that, therefore, He had come early in the morning and taken it away? We can hardly imagine what she did think, but when people are in great grief, they often think a great many things which they would not think if they were quite in their right minds. What strange delusions, what singular images of monstrous shape will pass through the heart of grief! God help us to be clear-minded and not to think what we should not like to say! Still, Mary was a brave woman, for she said to the gardener, “Tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.”

16. *Jesus said unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.*

She said, “My Master, my Rabbi, my Teacher, my Leader, my dear Master.” And I expect she said it with great exultation. She delighted to have her Master again, to have her Teacher again, for to be without her Teacher and without her Lord was a terrible bereavement to that gentle, teachable heart.

I suppose she was about to lay hold upon Christ, to grasp Him by the feet, lest He should again go away from her.

17. *Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not;*

Or, as the words may be read, “Hold me not; detain me not;”

17. *For I am not yet ascended to my Father:*

“I have to go away from you, so do not imagine that you can hold Me back. Nay, the time for such communications with Me is past, for I am now in another condition. I will communicate with you spiritually, but for that, you must wait a little—“I have not yet ascended to my Father.””

17. *But go to my brethren,—*

He had never called them that before. “Brethren,” He had called them, but not with the emphatic, “My.” “Go to my brethren,—”

17. *And say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*

Thus Christ explained to them that the Father, who is God, was God to Christ and God to them. The Father of Christ and their Father also.

18. *Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord.*

That was a very different message from her first one. Then she came and said, “He is gone. The tomb is empty. The stone is rolled away.” Now she comes with the joyful tidings, “I have seen our risen Lord.”

18. *And that he had spoken these things unto her.*

Sometimes we have to deliver the message of stern justice, which is one of doom to the guilty, but oh, how sweet it is to be able to come with the message of the Gospel!

“He lives; The great Redeemer lives.”

“He lives to plead for sinners. So, sinners, come and trust Him, for He will manifest Himself to you as surely as He did to these disciples, though not in exactly the same form.”

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.